

Stand Up! Speak Out!

MOUNTAIN OF SHOES

Guide for Discussion, Reflection or Role Play

The title *Mountain of Shoes* refers to the huge piles of victims' shoes found at Nazi concentration camps when the camps were liberated at the end of World War II. The Nazis had filled storehouses with mountains of victims' shoes, hair, luggage, and other personal belongings, from which they hoped to profit.

This song was particularly inspired by the poem "Mountain of Shoes" by survivor Moshe Shulstine (in which he imagines the mountains of victims' shoes--collected by the Nazis at the Majdanek death camp—rising up and marching), and an exhibit of victims' shoes on display at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

You can see a photograph of a [mountain of shoes](#) found at the Dachau concentration camp in the US Holocaust Memorial Museum archives

Such a mountain of shoes
Empty of little feet
Crumpled and cold and still
Silent and still

Did the soles of their feet
Leave an impression there
Different from pair to pair
Each soul unique

Did they walk hand in hand
Trembling, stumbling, wondering why
Did their mothers say, hush
You're safe with me, no need to cry

If their spirits should fly
From heavenly mountain top
To see where their footprints stopped
What would they find

Have we opened our hearts
And let the hate fly away
Is the world safe today
For all human kind

Such a mountain of shoes
Empty of little feet

Did the soles of their feet leave an impression there / Different from pair to pair / Each soul unique

1. When we study events such as the Holocaust, the genocide of Native Americans, or the African slave trade, the sheer numbers of millions of lives lost can be mind-numbing. Why is it so important to hear the personal stories of people who experienced these events? How do simple personal items, such as shoes, help remind us of how tragic the loss of even one human life is?

Did their mothers say, hush / You're safe with me / No need to cry

2. Write a reflection on, role play, or choreograph a dance portraying the song. What would it be like if home was not safe for children because the whole family was in danger of attacks or arrest?

Is the world safe today for all humankind?

3. How safe is the world today "for all humankind"? Research hate groups in the US at Southern Poverty Law Center's Hate Map. Who do they hate? Are there any similarities to school bullying?